



Public Statements of Heresy: The OCA's Adoption of the Heretical Branch Theory?

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The online Orthodox Christian world was again rocked by a publicly released document which seemingly endorses the adoption of ecumenistic heresy by the Metropolia, more commonly known as the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). Published by the OCA on June 9th, 2023, the document entitled "Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs" according to their official website is:

A cooperative effort of the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America, [...] is an offering to the Church to assist clergy and parishes in their work of instructing inquirers and the faithful in the truths of the Orthodox Christian Faith [1].

According to the website statement, "Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Project Manager for the Departments of the OCA, said, 'We presented this to His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon several years ago, to bring together interested pastors, teachers, and scholars from across the Orthodox Church [in] America and produce a presentation of the Orthodox Faith that would emphasize developing an Orthodox Christian worldview'" [2] and "Chancellor of the OCA, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, stated, 'We commend this manual for use in our parishes and institutions, and indeed, to all inquirers and Christians who desire to know more about the Orthodox Faith. We are grateful to the authors and contributors to this volume and especially to the donors who generously support the missionary outreach of the Church'" [3].





Contemporary Rabbinic Jews in Jerusalem

What exactly is problematic about this lengthy document that was recently posted to the Orthodox Church in America website? To begin with, in Chapter 11 entitled "History of the Church", subsection named "How Orthodoxy Understands Non-Christian Religions", which is written by Father Lawrence Farley, the known modern ecumenist who publishes such material at Ancient Faith Radio, it is stated in this OCA approved and published document concerning Rabbinic Judaism that,

Christianity regards contemporary Judaism as a true religion and as worshipping the one true God, but considers it to be deficient, since it stumbled at a step where it was called to mount up [4].

This publicly adopted statement by the Metropolia is rife with syncretistic ecumenism. How can any Orthodox Church in good conscience publish a document to their official website saying that this foreign religion, which in fact rejects Our Lord, God, and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is considered a true religion and worships the same God? Rabbinic Judaism, which this document refers to as "contemporary Judaism," outrightly rejects the the dogmatic truth of the Trinitarian Godhead, rejects Christ as the second person of the Holy Trinity, and rejects Christ as the promised Messiah.

Is Rabbinic Judaism a "true religion"? How can a foreign religion that rejects our dogmatic theology concerning the Godhead and Orthodox Christology be considered a "true religion"? If Judaism is a "true religion" as the Orthodox Church in America now states, why cannot other so-called Abrahamic religions, such as Islam be considered a "true religion"? A cursory examination of this question can help us rightly determine if this newly adopted statement by the Metropolia is correct or if they are in fact adopting heretical syncretistic ecumenism.

To begin to examine this question, we can look into the Judaic text that all Jews hold as sacred and authoritative, the Talmud. What exactly is the Talmud? "The Talmud is the textual record of generations of rabbinic debate about law, philosophy, and biblical interpretation, compiled between the 3rd and 8th centuries and structured as commentary on the Mishnah with stories interwoven. The Talmud exists in two versions: the more commonly studied Babylonian Talmud was compiled in present-day Iraq, while the Jerusalem Talmud was compiled in Israel" [5].

So what does the Talmud say about Christ our Saviour? In Tractate *Gittin 57a:3-4* it states:

Onkelos [6] then went and raised Jesus the Nazarene from the grave through necromancy [7]. Onkelos said to him: Who is most important in that world where you are now? Jesus said to him: The Jewish people. Onkelos asked him [Jesus]: Should I then attach myself to them in this world? Jesus said to him: Their welfare you shall seek, their misfortune you shall not seek, for anyone who touches them is regarded as if he were touching the apple of his eye (see Zechariah 2:12).

Onkelos said to him: What is the punishment of that man, *a euphemism for Jesus himself*, in the next world? Jesus said to him: He is punished with boiling excrement. As the Master said: Anyone who mocks the words of the Sages will be sentenced to boiling excrement. And this was his sin, as he mocked the words of the Sages. The Gemara comments: Come and see the difference between the sinners of Israel and the prophets of the nations of the world. As Balaam, who was a prophet, wished Israel harm, whereas Jesus the Nazarene, who was a Jewish sinner, sought their well-being [8].

Another example from the Talmud in *Sanhedrin 43a:20-21* states:

On Passover Eve they hung the corpse of Jesus the Nazarene after they killed him by way of stoning. And a crier went out before him for forty days, publicly proclaiming: Jesus the Nazarene is going out to be stoned because he practiced sorcery, incited people to idol worship, and led the Jewish people astray. Anyone who knows of a reason to acquit him should come forward and teach it on his behalf. And the court did not find a reason to acquit him, and so they stoned him and hung his corpse on Passover eve. Ulla said: And how can you understand this proof? Was Jesus the Nazarene worthy of conducting a search for a reason to acquit him? He was an inciter to idol worship, and the Merciful One states with regard to an inciter to idol worship: “Neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him” (Deuteronomy 13:9). Rather, Jesus was different, as he had close ties with the government, and the gentile authorities were interested in his acquittal. Consequently, the court gave him every opportunity to clear himself, so that it could not be claimed that he was falsely convicted [9].

Again from the Talmud, *Berakhot 17b:1-2* states:

“There is no breach”; that our faction of Sages should not be like the faction of David, from which Ahitophel emerged, who caused a breach in the kingdom of David. “And no going forth”; that our faction should not be like the faction of Saul, from which Doeg the Edomite emerged, who set forth on an evil path. “And no outcry”; that our faction should not be like the faction of Elisha, from which Gehazi emerged. “In our open places”; that we should not have a child or student who overcooks his food in public, *i.e., who sins in public and causes others to sin, as in the well-known case of Jesus the Nazarene* [10].

Do these blasphemous, heretical, and God-hating texts sound like something that could be considered a “true religion” that “worships the same God” as the Orthodox Church in America has stated in their newly adopted public document? God forbid! We can see clearly without doubt or reservation that these satanic Jewish texts are not from God but are from the demons and that this Rabbinic “Contemporary Judaism” is also from the demons.

The Orthodox Church in America states in this document that, “Today, many religious Jews [...], entertain a more positive conception of Jesus, regarding him as a good Jew whom his followers misunderstood and deified in a way that He never intended. The older, more classic (and more negative) assessment of Jesus may be found in the Talmud [referenced above], and in the polemical recounting of his life, the *Toldoth Yeshu* (The “Stories of Jesus”). It was this older, anti-Christian Judaism that the Church Fathers knew and reacted against” [11].

How absolutely magnanimous of today's Jews that they reject the deity of Christ, the God-man, in a nicer way than what was done by their Rabbis of old and in their authoritative texts such as the Talmud. You might be wondering what the OCA is referring to when it mentions the "older, anti-Christian Judaism that the Church Fathers knew and reacted against" [12]. Before we answer that, we have to examine what Christ the theanthropic God-man states in the scriptures about those who reject him. In the Gospel of St. Luke, Christ states, "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." (St. Luke 10:16, KJV). In the Gospel of St John, Christ states, "I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father?

Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (St. John 8:18-19, KJV). Again in the Gospel of St John, Christ states, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (St. John 14: 6-7, KJV).

Can Christ be any more clear? If you do not accept Christ you know not God. Does it matter at all whether it is the Jews of old who were more aggressive toward Christ and his Church or those more contemporary ecumenist Jews who reject Christ just the same but in a nicer way? Are niceties the criteria for defining what a "true religion" is and who "worships the same God" as the Orthodox Christians? Apparently, to the Orthodox Church in America, it is.



A Jewish Rabbi Reading the Talmud

Going back to the statement concerning the "older, anti-Christian Judaism that the Church Fathers knew and reacted against" referenced in the OCA document; you might be wondering what they are referring to. What the ecumenist authors of this OCA sponsored text are referring to are the writings of the Saints of the Orthodox Church who rejected Judaism as anything but a "true religion" that "worships the same God" as the Orthodox. For example, in the clear writings of Saint John Chrysostom, the Golden-Mouthed Patriarch of Constantinople and the author of our divine liturgy, in his volume entitled *Against the Jews* writes in his first homily that:

At any rate the Jews say that they, too, adore God. God forbid that I say that. No Jew adores God! Who says so? The Son of God says so. For he said: 'If you were to know my Father, you would also know me. But you neither know me nor do you know my Father.' Could I produce a witness more trustworthy than the Son of God? If, they, the Jews fail to know the Father, if they crucified the Son, if they thrust off the help of the Spirit, who should not make bold to declare plainly that the synagogue is a dwelling of demons? God is not worshipped there. Heaven forbid! From now on it remains a place of idolatry. But still some people pay it honor as a holy place [13].

As we can see, Christ himself as well as the Orthodox Saints have irrefutably spoken concerning those who reject Christ. Far from acknowledging this demonic religion as a "true religion" that is "worshipping the same God" as the Orthodox, they are in fact, trampling upon Him and His Church. Saint John Chrysostom's text saying these people who still "pay it [the synagogue] honor as a holy place," can easily be applied contemporaneously to Lawrence Farley, Thomas Soroka, Alexander Rentel, and the rest of the Metropolia and company.

Furthermore, this one statement is not the only problematic one contained in this document. In an ecclesiological mealy-mouthed statement in the same chapter of this heretical text, the Orthodox Church in America tries to blur the boundaries of the Church with statements such as this which say, "the reality of the Church, the grace and presence of Christ, always overflows its canonical boundaries, so that salvation and true Christians may be found in other churches as well" in direct contradiction to what the saints teach. For example, in Letter LXXII of Saint Cyprian of Carthage he states, that, "not even the baptism of a public confession and blood can profit a heretic to salvation, because there is no salvation out of the Church" [14].

Or in another paragraph surmising that the monophysite confessions "such as the Coptic, Ethiopian, and Armenian churches, are very close indeed. [Stating that] some Orthodox theologians believe that the difference between our Christologies is merely verbal, and not substantive, and that both the Chalcedonian Orthodox and the non-Chalcedonians are saying the same thing in different words" [15]. However, we know they are not saying the same thing in different words as the holy fourth Ecumenical Council definitively ruled on this declaring:

These things, therefore, *having been expressed by us with the greatest accuracy and attention*, the holy Ecumenical Synod defines that no one shall be suffered to bring forward a different faith (ἐτέραν πίστιν), nor to write, nor to put together, nor to excogitate, nor to teach it to others. But such as dare either to put together another faith, or to bring forward or to teach or to deliver a different Creed (ἕτερον σύμβολον) to as wish to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, from the Gentiles, or Jews or any heresy whatever, if they be Bishops or clerics let them be deposed, the Bishops from the Episcopate, and the clerics from the clergy; but if they be monks or laics: let them be anathematized [16].

With documents such as these being produced and blessed by the Orthodox Church in America, we must keep in mind the words of Saint Jude in his Epistle, which reminds us that "certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [...] they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 4; 12-13, NKJV) Amen.

References

[1]. "Departments Release "Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs"," Orthodox Church in America, accessed, June 10th, 2023, <https://www.oca.org/news/headline-news/departments-release-essential-orthodox-christian-beliefs>

[2]. Ibid.

[3]. Ibid.

[4]. Orthodox Church in America, *Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction* (Syosset: Departments of the Orthodox Church in America, 2023), 177.

[5]. Talmud: The William Davidson Edition, "About," accessed June 10th, 2023, <https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Talmud>

[6]. *Onkelos*: According to tradition, was a Roman convert to Judaism who lived in the first or second century. He translated Tanach into Aramaic, the spoken language of the day. Some identify Onkelos with a convert named Aquilas who translated the Tanach into Greek. According to tradition, he was counseled by his uncle, the emperor, to succeed by buying low and selling high. He later explained his conversion to his incensed uncle by repeating to him his own advice from years past. Onkelos' translation became the standard Aramaic translation, used daily by Jews world-wide long after Aramaic ceased being a living language for most Jews.

[7]. Necromancy: The supposed practice of communicating with the dead, especially in order to predict the future.

[8]. "Gittin 57a," Talmud, accessed June 10th, 2023, https://www.sefaria.org/Gittin.57a?ven=William_Davidson_Edition_-_English&lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en

[9]. "Sanhedrin 43a:20-26," Talmud, accessed June 10th, 2023, <https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin.43a.20-26?lang=en>

[10]. "Berakhot 17b:1," Talmud, accessed June 10th, 2023, <https://www.sefaria.org/Berakhot.17b.1?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en>

[11]. Orthodox Church in America, *Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction* (Syosset: Departments of the Orthodox Church in America, 2023), 177.

[12]. Ibid.

[13]. Saint John Chrysostom, "Homily I," in *Adversus Judaeos 386-387 A.D.*

[14]. Saint Cyprian of Carthage, "Epistle LXXII to Jubaianus, Concerning the Baptism of Heretics," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 5* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 1999), 380.

[15]. "Departments Release "Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs"," Orthodox Church in America, accessed, June 10th, 2023, <https://www.oca.org/news/headline-news/departments-release-essential-orthodox-christian-beliefs>

[16]. The Fourth Ecumenical Council "The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon" in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 14* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publications, 1999), 262.